

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **NORTH DAKOTA PLANS FOR ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S 200<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY WITH FREE PUBLIC PROGRAMS, EVENTS FEBRUARY 12**

BISMARCK – On February 12, North Dakotans will join the nation in commemorating the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of its 16<sup>th</sup> President, Abraham Lincoln, with free public programs and events.

Programs and events marking the day will include a joint session of the North Dakota Legislative Assembly, beginning at 12:45 p.m. at the State Capitol Building in Bismarck, and at the North Dakota Heritage Center at 5 p.m. Both programs will feature Chautauqua scholar George Frein in character as President Lincoln. Joining Frein at the Heritage Center program will be Chautauqua scholar Jerry Tweton in character as William Jayne, the first governor of Dakota Territory appointed by President Lincoln.

The joint session program is patterned after a 1909 joint session, when the North Dakota Legislative Assembly commemorated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Lincoln's birth. Master of ceremonies will be State Senator Tony Grindberg (R-Fargo), who is chair of the Lincoln Legislative Memorial Committee. Presentations will include a greeting from Governor John Hoeven; the reading of the Gettysburg Address by fourth grade students from the six elementary schools statewide named after Lincoln; "Lincoln and the Morrill Land Grant Act," which resulted in what is today North Dakota State University (NDSU), by NDSU President Joseph Chapman; and the Memorial Address by George Frein, in character as President Lincoln. Musical entertainment will feature the singing of "America," with the audience joining in song led by State Senator John Warner (D-Ryder) and accompanied on piano by State Senator Carolyn Nelson (D-Fargo); and a medley of music from Lincoln's era, performed by the Fauske Fiddlers of Bottineau.

Prior to the joint session, from 11:20 to 11:50 a.m. in Memorial Hall at the State Capitol Building, the Suzuki School of Music in Bismarck will provide Lincoln Era music. From 12 Noon to 12:20 p.m., students from the choirs at Bismarck High School and Century High School of Bismarck will perform a medley of Stephen Foster songs and an arrangement of "Dixie" by Tim Fogderud, Century High School band director. From 1:30 to 2 p.m., the Central Dakota Children's Choir (CDCC) of Bismarck will perform favorite songs of Lincoln. Performing will be the CDCC's Bel Canto choir of fourth through sixth grade students.

Also featured in Memorial Hall throughout the day will be a milk carton log cabin constructed by fourth grade students statewide, and panels from the *Lincoln's Legacy in North Dakota* traveling exhibit produced by the State Historical Society of North Dakota. The full exhibit is on display at the North Dakota Heritage Center through January 31, 2010. Various other displays and booths will also be featured in Memorial Hall throughout the afternoon.

Following the 5 p.m. free program, *A Conversation with President Abraham Lincoln*, at the North Dakota Heritage Center, refreshments will be served. Seating in the Russell Reid Auditorium is limited, and will be on a first-come, first-serve basis.

George Frein was a member of the philosophy and religion department at the University of North Dakota (UND) from 1968 to 1997, when he retired. He moved to South Carolina, where he has served as the artistic director of the Greenville Chautauqua Society since 1999. A professor emeritus of history at UND, Jerry Tweton is also the senior consultant to the North Dakota Humanities Council. Tweton has long been involved in Chautauqua, portraying such figures as Theodore Roosevelt and John Jacob Astor, in addition to Jayne.

"Lincoln is much more than the 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States," said State Historical Society of North Dakota Communications and Education Director Rick Collin, who was appointed by Governor Hoeven in December 2005 as the state's liaison to the National Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission. "He also represents, not only to Americans, but to people throughout the world, many of our core values as human beings – equal rights, democracy, liberty, freedom – and those are the ideals we are remembering during our state's Lincoln Bicentennial observance."

Organizing these events are members of the Lincoln Legislative Memorial Committee. Legislator members are committee chair and State Senator Tony Grindberg (R-Fargo), State Senator Carolyn Nelson (D-Fargo), Representative Nancy Johnson (R-Dickinson), and Representative Ed Gruchalla (D-Fargo). Other members are SHSND Director Merl Paaverud, Lincoln Bicentennial State Liaison and SHSND Communications and Education Director Rick Collin, SHSND Curator of Education Marilyn Snyder, SHSND Expansion Coordinator Claudia Berg, SHSND Foundation Executive Director Virginia Nelsen, North Dakota Council on the Arts Executive Director Jan Webb, and North Dakota Humanities Council Executive Director Brenna Daugherty.

Thursday, February 12 will also feature a performance of Herbert Mitgang's *Mister Lincoln* at 7:30 p.m. at the Askanase Auditorium at North Dakota State University (NDSU) in Fargo. This one-man show will feature NDSU graduate Mark Neukom, originally from Jamestown, North Dakota, now living in the Twin Cities. Produced by Donald Larew, the play begins with Lincoln's youth in Illinois and moves to the momentous years he spent in Washington, D.C. during the Civil War. It is free and open to the public. For more information, visit [http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/finearts/theatre/production\\_season/mister\\_lincoln.shtml](http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/finearts/theatre/production_season/mister_lincoln.shtml) call (701) 231-7932 or email [ana.rusness.ndsu.edu](mailto:ana.rusness.ndsu.edu).

During the week of February 9-13, a wide variety of programs and events for people of all ages commemorating the Lincoln Bicentennial, *Lincoln Life Lessons*, will also take place at the Frances Leach High Prairie Arts and Science Complex (FLHPASC) in Bismarck. Students from Baldwin, Dickinson, Naughton, Stanton, Bismarck and Mandan will participate in a variety of music, history, science, theatre, dance and art activities. There will also be presentations by historical illustrator Steve Stark of Fargo. Through drawings and discussion, Stark will present the life of Smith Stimmel, a longtime Fargo resident who served as one of Lincoln's White House bodyguards. Stimmel (1842-1935) practiced law in Fargo from 1882 to 1922, and is buried in Fargo's Riverside Cemetery.

The Frances Leach High Prairie Arts and Science Complex includes five anchor organizations that call the facility home – the Central Dakota Children's Choir, Gateway to Science, the Shade Tree Players, Suzuki School of Music, and the Theo Art School. For more information about the week's events at the Arts and Science Complex, call SHSND Curator of Education Marilyn Snyder at (701) 328-2792 or FLHPASC Program Coordinator Jennifer Haaland at (701) 471-9492 or email [msnyder@nd.gov](mailto:msnyder@nd.gov) or [jhaaland@bis.midco.net](mailto:jhaaland@bis.midco.net).

Another aspect of the State Historical Society of North Dakota's contribution to the Lincoln Bicentennial will be a special edition of its quarterly journal, ***North Dakota History***, that will concentrate on Lincoln's legacy in the 39<sup>th</sup> state. Scheduled to be published during the actual bicentennial month in February, it will include Smith Stimmel's memories of Lincoln, first published in a 1927 issue of the ***North Dakota Historical Quarterly*** (now ***North Dakota History***), and an article on the Lakota Indian response to the coming of the railroad. A final article will look back at North Dakota's contribution to the 1914 celebration by Norway of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its constitution and declaration as an independent nation. The people of North Dakota presented to Norway a heroic sized bust of Lincoln, sculpted by Valley City artist Paul Fjelde, that still stands today in Frogner Park in Oslo.

Lincoln never visited what is now North Dakota, but the land that is now the 39<sup>th</sup> state was forever changed by the policies and laws enacted during his Presidency. During his administration, President Lincoln brought change to the Northern Plains by appointing then-Dakota Territory's first two governors, encouraged settlement by signing the 1862 Homestead Act, and signed the Morrill Land Grant College Act, which resulted in what is today North Dakota State University. He signed the 1862 Department of Agriculture Act, which created an agency designed to promote U.S. farming and agricultural technology and techniques. The same year, he signed the Pacific Railway Act authorizing the transcontinental railroad, and in 1864 signed the charter for the Northern Pacific Railroad. Military forts and schools were named in his honor.

He was also President during the Minnesota Indian War of 1862, which included the Dakota Indian siege of Fort Abercrombie near what is now Fargo. The conflict

erupted between the Santee or Eastern Dakota and the United States over a long litany of broken government promises and increased white settlement on Indian land. It also led to the largest mass execution in American history when, on December 26, 1862, 38 Dakota Indians were hanged in Mankato, Minnesota. The toll could have been much higher, but President Lincoln commuted the death sentences of 264 prisoners.

“There are so many different ways to view and interpret Lincoln, depending on what issue you’re considering,” said Collin. “A good example is the Western Lincoln versus the Eastern Lincoln. Here in the West, we look at the Lincoln who signed the Homestead Act, the Morrill Land Grant Act, and the charter for the Northern Pacific Railroad that had such an enormous impact on opening up the settlement of the Northern Plains, including what is now North Dakota.

We look at the prairie lawyer Lincoln who rose to the highest office in the land with only one year of formal schooling. We look at the Lincoln who was President during the Minnesota Indian War of 1862. Then you have the Eastern Lincoln – the Lincoln of the Emancipation Proclamation and the freeing of the slaves, the Gettysburg Address, and the commander-in-chief of the Union Army in the great battles of the Civil War. During this bicentennial, we look to celebrate the best qualities that Lincoln represents to all of us, no matter where we live.”

For more information about the Lincoln Bicentennial, visit the State Historical Society of North Dakota’s website at [www.history.nd.gov](http://www.history.nd.gov) or the Abraham Lincoln National Bicentennial Commission website at [www.abrahamlincoln200.org](http://www.abrahamlincoln200.org).